



News Release

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Ag secretary comments to EPA Administrator Whitman on atrazine registration renewal

TOPEKA— In a letter to EPA this week regarding that agency's review of atrazine registration, Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Jamie Clover Adams asked EPA Administrator Christie Whitman to consider the need states have for flexibility to deal with regional weed control, runoff and water quality protection issues.

"Atrazine herbicide is an important tool for Kansas corn and grain sorghum producers," Adams said. "Grain sorghum may be considered a minor crop nationwide, but its production is extremely important to Kansas."

To support her claim that states need flexibility, Adams cited Kansas' work to reduce the amount of atrazine and other soil-applied herbicides in state surface waters.

"Since 1990, the Kansas Department of Agriculture, various Kansas agricultural organizations and the state's producers have made water quality protection measures a high priority," Adams said. "During the process, we learned that targeting producer education, demonstration and incentive programs are the most direct route to achieving desired changes in practices to improve water quality."

The Kansas Pesticide Law authorizes the secretary of agriculture to initiate pesticide management areas. The secretary can identify individual watersheds, or other geographic areas, and mandate specific management practices or pesticide use restrictions. A pesticide management area initiated in the Delaware River basin in 1992 was successful in reducing herbicide levels in water supplies, although Adams said she prefers to hold her PMA authority in reserve to address instances where voluntary programs are not adopted.

"Neither standardized pesticide rate restrictions nor nationwide blanket best management practices will correct problems that essentially are a consequence of topography, soils, rainfall patterns or other unique characteristics of specific problem watersheds," Adams said.

To address the needs of 30 public water supplies nationwide with atrazine levels higher than existing standards, Adams suggested aggressively implementing targeted voluntary or mandatory watershed prevention programs similar to the Kansas pesticide management area. Adams also suggested that intensive testing of another 50 water supplies that might be exceeding atrazine standards could well show that few are in fact above the drinking water standard.

To read Adams' letter to Whitman, visit www.accesskansas.org/kda/News/newsre/AtrazineWhitman.pdf.